

# Reynolds Army Community Hospital Outpatient Pharmacy

## *Why has there been a change in pharmacy procedures and why do I have to wait in line twice?*

This may be a common perception for many patients presenting to the pharmacy at Reynolds Army Community Hospital. The process change is part of an ongoing top to bottom redesign to eventually incorporate new state-of-the-art pharmacy technology. All of the current and planned changes are designed for improving workflow, enhancing patient safety, meeting for stringent regulatory requirements, and decreasing overall wait time. While it may appear that you are lining p twice, once to get a number and then again to pick up your medications, the overall wait and transaction times will be less. Once you are queued to a window for pick up, the orders are complete and the proper medication counseling is rendered. Patients are offered options and are separated into more efficient fill categories to help facilitate workflow. Furthermore, this new system allows the pharmacy staff to troubleshoot and resolve important drug therapy problems without impeding overall workflow.

Two windows, designated as 'In-Windows', are the initial drop-off/check-in point. Staffing and patient volume will determine whether one or two windows are in operation. The process starts by presenting to an 'In-Window', where a pharmacy staff member screens the prescription(s), obtains necessary information, and determines the appropriate ticket category that best suits your needs. Patients are triaged, or separated into groups, based on medical urgency, active duty priority, or patient preference. The ticket machine is now located *inside* the pharmacy and a staff member will hand a ticket to you. A duplicate of this ticket is placed with your prescription(s) for tracking.

You will generally have one of three options to choose from:

- (1) **Drop off your prescription for next day pick-up (after 1100).** You can "drop off" prescriptions at the 'In-Window' during normal duty hours and pick up your medications at Window #1 after 1100 the next duty day. These prescriptions will be processed and filled after hours, allowing the staff to focus on same-day prescriptions.
- (2) **Drop off your prescription for same day pick-up (*minimum of a 2-hour service time*).** This service allows you to drop-off your prescription(s), go to an appointment, lunch, or back to work and return at a later time the same day for pick-up. This option will be available from **0800-1530 Monday through Friday**. At the time of dropping off prescription(s), you will be given a ticket with a barcode that you *must retain for prescription pick-up*. When using this option and when you return to the pharmacy, simply check the message board to see if your number appears. If it does, scan your ticket under the barcode scanner mounted to the wall in the pharmacy lobby. This process will place your number in the "to be dispensed" queue and you will be called to a dispensing window to receive your medication. Please be advised that your number will be placed in the queue and it make take an additional minute or two until your number is called.
- (3) **Wait in the lobby while we fill your prescription(s).** If you choose to wait for your prescription(s), you will be prioritized or triaged into one of three (3) categories. Triaging means that a pharmacy staff member determines the priority for filling the prescription(s). The pharmacy uses three triage categories: **urgent, active duty in uniform, and in-waiting**. For instance, a patient presenting from dental surgery requiring pain medications or a visibly sick young child requiring antibiotics will receive the highest priority. Active duty in uniform is given the next priority, followed by all other patients who choose to wait. Each patient category corresponds to one of several colored bins and an alphanumeric ticket series that alerts pharmacy staff to a patient's triage level. Your ticket number also indicates in which order your prescription(s) will be filled within a particular category. An example illustrates this process: *If patient 'A' comes in with a prescription for a maintenance medication for blood pressure and they want to wait in the lobby until ready and patient 'B' comes in with prescription(s) for medications to relieve the pain associated with a broken arm, patient 'B' will be served first.* Additionally, it is important to note, numbers may be called out of numerical sequence based upon the complexity of an order or problems requiring resolution (e.g.

clarification of an order with a physician). For example, a prescription(s) for a single tube of ointment is faster to process, fill, and dispense compared to an order for eight prescriptions from a civilian provider. We ask you to please considerate and understanding of these circumstances as we look to keep overall wait and transaction times to a minimum.

Prescription(s) turned in at an 'In-Window' must first be processed into the Composite Health Care System (CHCS) computer. Once your prescription(s) are entered into the computer system, they are then taken to the 'fill station' within the pharmacy. "Urgent" prescriptions will be filled first, followed by "active-duty in uniform", "in-waiting patients", "same day drop-off" prescription(s) and lastly, "next-day drop off" prescription(s). Once prescription(s) are filled, a pharmacist checks the orders, and the ticket is processed as 'complete'. If you dropped off prescriptions for later same-day pick-up, this is when your number will be sent to the message board for display. If you choose to wait in the pharmacy lobby, you will be called to one of the dispensing windows by your ticket number in the order it was 'completed'. As a reminder, please note the numbers may be called out of sequence, so must listen and watch for your number if you are waiting. If you decide to drop-off your prescription(s) for same-day pick-up, your prescription will remain in "suspense" until you return and scan your ticket. We ask that you please **DO NOT** leave the pharmacy waiting area unless you choose the ticket for drop-off/same-day pick-up or drop-off/next-day pick up.

If you wish to pick up your prescription refills at the Main Pharmacy, we highly encourage that you please consider utilizing the Commissary Pharmacy, otherwise known as the Pharmissary, service for either walk-in or call-in prescription refills. This service will allow the Main Pharmacy to expedite dispensing to patients who are waiting for new prescriptions. Prescriptions renewed by a health care provider are not considered refills and are processed as if a new prescription. If you prefer to use the Main Pharmacy to pick up a walk-in refill, you will be triaged at one of the 'In-Windows' where you will be issued a ticket and called to a pick-up window. If the Main Pharmacy is chosen as the pick-up site for a call-in or online refill, then you will present to Window #1 for refill pick-up the next duty day after 1100. Please note that the patient's military ID card is **required** for prescription pick-up. The ID is required for determining eligibility, meeting federally mandated patient privacy requirements, and, most importantly, as a patient safety check.

The RACH Department of Pharmacy now services over 50,000 beneficiaries and dispenses between 1,000 to 1,500 new prescriptions and 500 to 700 refills per day. Waiting times in the pharmacy may vary depending upon the number of patients utilizing our pharmacy at a given time. The pharmacy attempts to adjust staffing when faced with an increased demand, however, we have no control over when you decide to come in. We thank you in advance for your patience as we continue to strive for improvements in all aspects of our distributive and professional pharmacy functions.

Respectfully,

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